

Crossing the Digital Divide (v47)

“Snippets”

By Joseph Feigon for the Observer

There's roughly two months left to winter. Lots of water this year, and many a morning where the ground goes “crunch crunch” when walked upon. While the days grow increasingly longer, we're still stuck indoors more than most of us prefer. Indoor hours usually mean more Internet usage - both adult and child. If you're using Exede or Hughes, there's obvious concern about quota usage. There are two key areas usage can escape your control: unchecked video playbacks and infected devices.

Malware, viruses and older device firmware are like leaky faucets and old pipes. Most infections aren't obvious, they slowly rob you of bandwidth, and gradually make your network and computers grind to a halt. You need not be an IT expert to take a few, preemptive steps to ensure safe browsing for you and your family. Furthermore, if, like many of us, you pay for Internet usage, you may (justifiably) want to keep what you're paying for yourself.

- 1) Malwarebytes is one of the BEST software tools you can use to keep bad guys in check. Download and install the FREE version, or add real-time coverage for under \$25/year. This is by far, the one piece of protection that has saved many a backside!
- 2) Software updates - keep your computers up-to-date. Need I say more?
- 3) Wireless and wired routers need to be kept current as well. Update the firmware on your wireless router today. If the device is more than a few years old, consider replacement. Remember, a router is another computing device.
- 4) Wireless encryption and wireless passphrases. WPA and WPA2 are more secure than WEP. If there's no security on your wireless, you're exposed. This is particularly important if you have neighbors. Most wireless routers won't extend before a couple hundred feet - if you live off-grid, this is likely less of a concern, but the routers firmware is still important to keep current.

Protecting our young ones - control what can and cannot be seen

- 1) Have you setup the family PC/Mac with unique logins for everyone? Did you configure your child's account as such? Windows and Apple computers are both easily configured to support adult and child accounts without involving an expert.
- 2) You can also setup Google to filter age-appropriate content: <http://www.howtogeek.com/177958/use-supervised-users-to-set-up-parental-controls-on-a-chromebook-or-just-in-chrome/>

